



Another Fire Engine Approved

Chief Keeping An Eye On City's Growth

by Dave Walters

Zephyrhills Fire Rescue will be responding to calls next year in a new fire engine after city council agreed to replace an aging engine in the department's fleet.

Fire Chief Brian Swartout presented his budgeted request to members of city council Monday night where a new \$525,000 piece of equipment was welcomed with overwhelming approval. This would be part two of Swartout's capital improvement plan. ZFR took delivery of the first new truck eight months ago, which left one older vehicle in service.

Swartout said the new truck will be identical to the one the department received in 2018. He said the price of the apparatus is expected to increase and advised that the city would save money if an order is placed before Feb. 1. The truck, which will take 10-14 months to be built, is budgeted and will be paid for in the next fiscal year.

"The cost of these vehicles continues to go up and if you plan right and put the older vehicles in reserves, you can get the maximum amount of time out of them," Swartout said. "We're looking at a 20-year purchase here on a vehicle like this.

"You buy a quality product and take care of it and maintain it, it will last the city a long time. It also prolongs the life of the vehicles we already have."

The aging trucks being replaced will remain as reserve vehicles. When Swartout took the reigns as chief, the city was running an aerial truck and a brush truck on calls, with two other trucks out of service and in need of repairs. He has since boosted the fleet.

Swartout's capital improvement plan includes the possibility of adding additional equipment to help keep up

Engine • Continued on Page 4A

Burgess Awaits Approval

VA Post Needs Full Cabinet's Endorsement

by Joe Potter

State Rep. Danny Burgess will have to wait until at least Jan. 31 to be confirmed as director of the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs, according to his district office in Zephyrhills.

Newly elected Republican Gov. Ron



Danny Burgess

and Consumer Services Nikki Fried said she wasn't ready yet to vote on

DeSantis nominated Burgess, R-38th District, for the position.

During a meeting of the Florida Cabinet on Jan. 10, newly elected Commissioner of Agriculture

Burgess' nomination, Burgess' office said.

Fried, Florida's highest elected Democratic statewide officeholder and the state's first female Commissioner of Agriculture and Consumer Services, is one of the three members of the Cabinet. The other two members are Attorney General Ashley Moody and Chief Financial Officer Jimmy Patronis, both of whom are Republicans.

Burgess • Continued on Page 5A

Take A Chomp Out Of A Gator

Serious Competitor Enters Saturday's BBQ Festival

by Keri McAlpine



In addition to offering the BBQ classics, Jack Rhoden of Cracker Jack's Pits Off BBQ, will be slow cooking two alligators for his first time competing at Saturday's Pigz in Z'hills BBQ and Blues Festival.

Photo Provided

While it's worthwhile to check out the cooks in the professional category of the Pigz in Z'hills BBQ cook-off, the backyard competitors are not messing around and take the competition just as seriously.

This year's Jan. 19 festival will welcome a new backyard competitor, Cracker Jack's Pits Off BBQ, led by local resident Jack Rhoden.

After years of being around other BBQ cooks, taking notes and listening, he has perfected his own recipes and is excited to offer his creations at the ninth annual BBQ and Blues Festival. Rhoden will be assisted at the festival by friends Jay McCarty and Bruce Campbell; Lisa Chambers and Emma Rhoden will also be on hand to help serve food.

"Oh, I'm ready ... I've got my own way of doing things," Rhoden said. "I'm like a sponge - I listen to a lot to people in the BBQ brethren."

Residents may have tasted or heard of Rhoden's cooking before as he is known to host events to give back to the community - normally for first responders or other groups needing a helping hand and a hot meal.

Gator • Continued on Page 7A

They're Here For More Than Beer

Brewery Helping Charitable Groups Raise Funds

Story and photos by Dave Walters

Since Robert and Terry Hilferding opened the doors of the Zephyrhills Brewing Company, they have hosted charitable organizations to assist in fundraising efforts.

It's a recipe that has literally paid off for youth groups such as both Boy and Girl Scout Troops and the Future Farmers of America.

In addition, Zephyrhills Brewing

Brewery • Continued on Page 6A



Robert Hilferding, left, and his wife Terry, far right, of the Zephyrhills Brewing Company, are joined by the Humane Society of Pasco's Christine DePaolo, Becky Todd and Lynn Bianco during a Saturday fundraising event at the brewery.

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Zephyrhills Arrests

Three Bottles Of Pills, Not A Single Prescription

Jonathan David McDonald, 41, transient, was arrested by Zephyrhills police on Jan. 3 on charges of possession of methamphetamine and three counts of grand theft of a controlled substance. While checking out at Publix, 7838 Gall Blvd., the victim accidentally left a bag of prescribed medications on the counter. The prescriptions consisted of Tramadol, Hydrocodone and Clonazepam. Video surveillance captured McDonald allegedly taking the medications and then leaving the store without making any attempts to return them. The victim advised they made contact with McDonald a few days after the incident and that he admitted to taking the medications. Police later made contact with McDonald at 7-11, 7600 Gall Blvd., and recognized him from the video surveillance as the suspect who took the pills. He was placed under arrest and a search of his person revealed a plastic baggy containing a white crystalline substance in his pants pocket. The substance field-tested positive for methamphetamine. Post Miranda, McDonald advised he was wearing a female friend's pants and he did not realize the substance was in the pocket. He was placed under arrest and transported to the Pasco County jail.



attached not being assigned. After stopping, Gabaree exited the vehicle and attempted to flee the scene but was ultimately apprehended. A check confirmed him to be a habitual traffic offender and his license to be revoked as of May 2005. A search of the vehicle revealed a small box containing a baggy holding a white crystalline substance as well as a glass pipe with a straw attached. Both the substance and the pipe tested positive for methamphetamine. Post Miranda, Gabaree denied ownership of the narcotics and paraphernalia. He was placed under arrest and later transported to the Pasco County jail.

Cameron Nicholas Eckert, 31, transient, was arrested by Zephyrhills police on Jan. 3 on a charge of possession of marijuana. Police made contact with Eckert at Wawa, 6450 Gall Blvd., and placed him under a Baker Act due to statements made at the scene. A search for weapons was conducted for Eckert's safety and a plastic bag containing a substance consistent with marijuana was found in his front pocket. Further search revealed rolling paper containing more of the substance inside of Eckert's backpack. He was placed under arrest and later transported to the Pasco County jail following clearance.



33 weeks pregnant and was instead transported to AdventHealth Zephyrhills by Fire Rescue.

Armando Hernandez, 67, of 38044 Bridge Ave., was arrested by Zephyrhills police on Jan. 3 on a charge of battery on a law enforcement officer. Police were transporting Hernandez to a Baker Act receiving facility. Upon removing him from the patrol car, Hernandez allegedly began striking the window of another marked police cruiser. The driver of the vehicle, another fully uniformed officer, attempted to grab Hernandez, who then began punching at the officer. One of the blows successfully struck the officer on the right wrist. Hernandez was placed into handcuffs and medically cleared to be transported to the Pasco County jail.



Louis Anthony Guinta, 51, of 36161 Stable Wilk Ave., was arrested by Zephyrhills police on Jan. 7 on a charge of domestic battery. Police made contact with the victim in the lobby of the Zephyrhills Police Department. The victim advised that she had been physically abused by Guinta, who allegedly struck her with his fists multiple times, leaving bruises to her body. The victim further advised that he threw her out of their residence on Jan. 4 after the altercation on Jan. 2. Police observed bruises to the victim's leg consistent with her testimony. Police made contact with Guinta at his residence. Guinta advised, post Miranda, that he did strike the victim during a heated argument and that he also threw a phone at her. He was placed under arrest and transported to the Pasco County jail.



Desiree Rachelle Peters, 29, of 39329 County Line Road, was arrested by Zephyrhills police on Jan. 5 on charges of retail theft, possession of methamphetamine, possession of drug paraphernalia, tampering with evidence, knowingly driving while license suspended or revoked, and resisting without violence. While at Walmart, 7631 Gall Blvd., Peters allegedly selected seven items, valued at \$48.19, and then proceeded past all points of sale without rendering payment for the items. Loss prevention witnessed the incident and attempted to stop her, at which time Peters fled the scene. Police later made contact with Peters during a traffic stop at 20th Street and Fifth Avenue in reference to her being a suspect in the theft. While speaking to law enforcement, Peters advised that her license was not valid. She was removed from the vehicle and, during a pat down, police observed her to be chewing on a small plastic baggy containing a white crystalline substance, which she swallowed after failing to comply with commands to spit it out. Further search of her person revealed a glass pipe with white residue hidden inside of her bra and a stolen Walmart speaker hidden in her waistband. Another small baggy containing a white substance was found inside the vehicle's center console and two more were located inside of her purse. The white substance field-tested positive for methamphetamine. She was placed under arrest and transported to the Pasco County jail.



Don Scott Trotter, 50, of 4932 Fourth St., was arrested by Zephyrhills police on Jan. 2 on a charge of domestic battery. Police responded to Trotter's residence where they made contact with the victim. The victim advised she and Trotter were engaged in a verbal argument that turned physical when he allegedly slapped her in the face with an open hand, pulled her hair, and scratched her right forearm. Police observed a still-bleeding laceration to the victim's forearm consistent with her story. The police made contact with Trotter who, post Miranda, denied all of the victim's allegations and insisted he did not batter her in any way. He was placed under arrest and transported to the Pasco County jail.



Chaqunda Sharman Davis, 20, of 7124 Ryman Loop, was arrested by Zephyrhills police on Jan. 5 on a charge of driving under the influence. Davis allegedly was driving while under the influence of alcohol and, due to her impairment, failed to yield the right of way and caused a crash at Forbes Road and County Road 54. The crash resulted in damage to the other vehicle as well as surrounding property. Police arrived on the scene and observed signs of impairment in Davis and also detected the odor of alcohol emanating from her breath. Post Miranda, Davis admitted to drinking alcohol prior to operating her vehicle. She was placed under arrest and transported to the Pasco County jail following medical clearance.



Sharon Elaine Roberts, 53, 5543 11th St., was arrested by Zephyrhills police on Jan. 4 on a Pasco County warrant for felon in possession of a firearm. Police responded to Roberts' residence in reference to an investigation. An active warrant was confirmed, and Roberts was placed under arrest.



Jean Lorenzo Gabaree, 37, of Tampa, was arrested by Zephyrhills police on Jan. 4 on charges of possession of methamphetamine, possession of drug paraphernalia, habitual driving while license suspended or revoked, and resistance without violence. Police made contact with Gabaree during a traffic stop at McDonald's, 6042 Gall Blvd., in reference to the tag



Khija Mikel Bailey, 18, of Riverview, was arrested by Zephyrhills police on Jan. 5 on a charge of domestic battery. Police made contact with the victim in the 5000 block of 19th Street in reference to a domestic battery. The victim stated Bailey came to his residence to confront him about his unfaithfulness. She allegedly grabbed him by his shirt, tearing it. Police made contact with Bailey, who advised the altercation did not become physical, though she did grab him by his shirt. Bailey was placed under arrest, at which time she began complaining of stomach pain. Bailey is



Christopher Foy Crews, 37, of 38014 Eighth Ave., was arrested by Zephyrhills police on Dec. 28 on a fugitive from justice warrant out of Missouri for child neglect. Police made contact with Crews at his residence and placed him under arrest after an active warrant was confirmed. He was transported to the Pasco County jail.



The information provided in the Zephyrhills Police report is taken from public record. All parties are considered innocent until proven guilty.

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Zephyrhills Automated Trash Collection To Begin Soon

Residential Z-Carts Will Be Delivered In Mid-February

Staff Report

Zephyrhills will be delivering Z-Carts to residential customers in mid-February that will make it possible for automated trash pickup, according to City Manager Steve Spina.

The 95-gallon containers are the city's property. They will be stamped with a serial number specific to the address where they are delivered and customers shouldn't take them with them if they move.

The Z-Carts should be placed with the handle farthest away from the street.

Small amounts of yard waste may be placed in the Z-Carts as long as it is still possible for the lid to close. Trash/yard waste should not be overflowing.

The Z-Cart must be three feet away from recycling bins and other objects, such as mailboxes, trees, streetlights and parked vehicles.

The Z-Cart should be placed at the end of the driveway to avoid conflict with parked vehicles on as level a surface as possible and away from overhanging tree branches.

The carts must be out on the curb by 7 a.m. on the days your garbage is collected and should be removed

from the curb by 7 p.m. on that day.

The Z-Carts have wheels underneath them to assist in moving them from one place to another.

If your trash is currently being picked up in an alley, your new Z-Cart should also be placed in the alley for pick-up.

The following materials must not be placed in the Z-Carts: automotive batteries, cell phones, chemicals, computer components, construction materials, DVD or VCR players, fluorescent light bulbs, hazardous wastes, microwave ovens, oils, lubricants or antifreeze, paints or paint cans, radios or stereos, recyclable materials, televisions, tires and yard waste.

Any of the prohibited items listed may be disposed of at the East Pasco Transfer Station, 9626 Handcart Road.

"No employees will lose their jobs or be reassigned; we have plenty of work to do in the sanitation division," said Public Works Director Shane LeBlanc.

Contact the Public Works Department at (813) 780-0022 if your Z-Cart is damaged or missing or your garbage was not collected.

Public Works may also be contacted regarding curbside yard waste collection and recycling or trash questions.



Sanitation superintendent Bobby Black with one of the Z-Carts that will be delivered to residential trash customers in Zephyrhills in February. Photo Provided

Elks Give Back To Zephyrhills



Winners of the Zephyrhills Elks Lodge #2731 Hoop Shoot competition.

The Elks were busy throughout the month of December and in the spirit of giving. Thanks to proceeds from the club's 50/50 raffles and donations from members, the Elks Lodge #2731 was able to benefit the community.

On Dec. 14, \$6,200 in gift cards were donated to homeless teens of Zephyrhills High School to purchase ingredients for holiday meals.

Attending the presentation of the gift cards for the teens were Principal Angie Stone; Registrar Diane Vaughn; Elks Exalted Ruler Ken Fabiani; and Elks Past Exalted Rulers Dave Moyer, Alice Perry, Bill Knapp, Shirley Crawford and Elsie McFarland.

Another donation made recently by the local Elks included a 65-inch television and coffee to the James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital Domiciliary.

On Dec. 15, the Lodge hosted their annual Hoop Shoot competition for boys and girls at the YMCA. Winners included Jazmine May for girls 12-13; Malachi May for boys 8-9; Clayton Rogers for boys 10-11; and Eeori Pope for boys 12-13.

The district competition will be held



Thanks to donations and proceeds from 50/50 raffles the Elks were able to help out hungry high school students during the holidays. Photos Provided

Jan. 12 at Hudson High School, hosted by Aripeka Elks Lodge. blower was presented to the Zephyrhills Little League, accepted by ZLL Vice President Darryl Oney.

Last, but certainly not least, a leaf

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East Pasco Events

Jan. 17 – Understanding Alzheimer’s and Dementia – A representative from the Alzheimer’s Association will discuss all aspects of Alzheimer’s and dementia from 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. at AdventHealth Zephyrhills, 38233 Daughtery Road. Call (813) 779-6476 to make a reservation.

Jan 17 – Women’s Health Screening and Education Day – Ladies 21-65 years old are eligible for free clinical breast exams, pelvic exams, blood pressure tests, giveaways and more at various locations through Pasco County from 7 a.m.-4 p.m. Sponsored by Premier Community HealthCare. Appointments are encouraged, walk-ins are welcome. Call (352) 518-2000 for participating locations and to schedule an appointment.

Jan. 18 – Relief for Men: Understanding Prostate Urolift – This same-day surgery relieves frequent and difficult urination caused by an enlarged prostate. Bertram Lewis, Board Certified in Urology, will explain about how this minimally invasive surgery is performed and the positive impact it’s having on men’s lives. Held from 12-1 p.m. at AdventHealth Zephyrhills, 7050 Gall Blvd. Call (877) 534-3108 to make a reservation.

Jan. 18 – Senior Center Open House – Pasco County Senior Services Division will sponsor an open house event from 1-3 p.m. at Saint Elizabeth Episcopal Church, 5855 16th St., to celebrate their renewed partnership that will offer local seniors nutritious meals and a variety of recreational and educational activities. The casual get-together will feature light refreshments, door prizes and music.

Jan. 19 – Pigz in Z’Hills BBQ and Blues Fest – The ninth annual event will feature a barbeque competition, live music, classic cars, cornhole tournament and a kid’s zone. Held from 10 a.m.-6 p.m. at 5200 Airport Road. Admission is free with \$10 parking. Contact (813) 782-1913 for more information.

Jan. 19 – Car Wash Fundraiser – The Zephyrhills High School cheer team will hold a car wash fundraiser from 9 a.m.-1 p.m. on the south lot of Thomas and Son, Inc., 4542 Gall Blvd. Proceeds will go toward funding the team’s trip to compete in the National High School Cheerleading Championships in Orlando from Feb. 8-10. Contact Wade Thomas at (813) 780-1132 for information.

Jan. 19 – Plant City Social Dance – A dance will take place from 6:30-9:30 p.m. at Strawberry Square, 4401 Promenade Blvd. in Plant City and feature a 3,000 square foot floating wood floor to dance on. Social dancing includes slow dances, waltzes, line dances, cha-cha and rumbas, two-step and country slow, swing and free style. Come dance to the music by DJ Ken Miller. Admission is \$6 per person. Visit www.strawberrysquaredancing.com for information.

Jan. 20 – Southport Springs Casino Night – Benefitting the Thomas Promise Foundation, the event will be held at the Southport Springs Clubhouse, 3737 Southport Springs Pkwy., from 4:30-8 p.m. Entry includes \$1,000 in casino chips, appetizers, and one drink per person. Poker tournament, cash bar, prizes,

and tons of fun. Tickets are available at the main clubhouse on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 9 a.m.-12 p.m. or at the community office on Thursdays and Fridays from 9 a.m.-12 p.m. and 1-4 p.m.

Jan. 22 – Discover Essential Oils for Yourself – Held at the Living Food Bakery, 38201 10th Ave., from 3-4:30 p.m. Call (813) 715-0622 for information.

Jan. 22 – Human Trafficking Awareness Event – In observation of National Human Trafficking Awareness Day, Pasco-Hernando State College will host an event at the East Campus, 36727 Blanton Road., from 11 a.m.-12 p.m. Representatives from the Pasco County Sheriff’s Office will discuss the realities of human trafficking in Pasco County. The event is part of PHSC’s ongoing Community Awareness Series available to community members, students, faculty, and staff. For more information call 1-855-NOW-PHSC or visit www.phsc.edu.

Jan. 23 – My Aching Knee – Mako Robotic-Arm Assisted Surgery is a solution for those suffering with painful, degenerative joint disease. Randolph Knight, MD, Orthopedic Surgeon, will share how this surgical approach allows for precise alignment and restores range of motion. Held from 12-1 p.m. at AdventHealth Zephyrhills, 7050 Gall Blvd. Call (877) 534-3108 to make a reservation.

Jan. 24 – Migraine Triggers – Chiropractor Chris Schriver from the Frank Clinic, will share common causes of migraines and how to avoid these triggers. Held from 1-2 p.m. at AdventHealth Zephyrhills, 38233 Daughtery Road. Call (813) 779-6476 to make a reservation.

Jan. 25-26 – Tubby’s Q and Smokehouse Grand Opening – The restaurant invites the Tampa Bay area to their Zephyrhills location, 5740 Seventh St., for free samples and 10 percent off of all menu items. Call (770) 377-7542 or email contact.us@tubbysq.com for information.

Jan. 26 – Kumquat Festival – Held from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. in downtown Dade City. Craft and food vendors galore, kids corral, entertainment, and more. Free admission. Contact the Greater Dade City Chamber of Commerce at (352) 567-3769 for information.

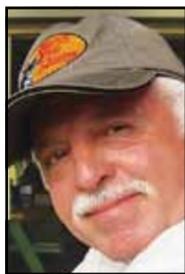
Jan. 26 – Run For Life – The 5K and one mile fun run is now open for registration. The event will take place on Main Street in Zephyrhills and benefits the Pregnancy Care Center of Zephyrhills. To register, go to www.pcczephyrhills.org. All who register by Jan. 7 are guaranteed a t-shirt.

Jan. 27 – Shabby Chic Vintage Market and Artisan Day – The annual event offers DIY workshops, a creation station, an eclectic array of décor styles, artisanal food items, boutique clothing and more. This year’s event will be held from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. at the Grove in Wesley Chapel, 6105 Wesley Grove Blvd. Attendance and parking are free.

Jan. 29 – Chemical Free Home with Essential Oil – Held at the Living Food Bakery, 38201 10th Ave., from 3-4:30 p.m. Call (813) 715-0622 for information.

For more events visit www.pasconewspubs.com

Commentary



First Things First

Greg First

Ready To Duke It Out

Last month I wrote about some banking issues that were ultimately resolved after hours of waiting on hold before I could actually talk to a representative. It seemed at the time like a pretty simple solution would happen but it turned out to be a major undertaking. Since then I have decided to go to plan B.

Wow, now on to my new issue.

On Dec. 12, 2018, I wrote a check to Duke Energy for payment on a couple of accounts that I take care of. As of Dec. 26, the check had not cleared. I called the electric company and they said if it was not paid by the due date a couple of days later, that a late fee would be charged on all three accounts! The rep told me if I gave her the bank routing number I could save the late charges. She did say there would be a charge for the electronic transfer on all of the accounts but if the check would happen to clear before the deadline the charges would be refunded. Thankfully, the check cleared the day it was due.

Now I get my January bill on these accounts and the payments were credited to these accounts but the electronic charges were not refunded. I called Duke Energy and told the clerk that I had some concerns. The check that I actually wrote on Dec. 12 was

deposited by Duke Energy on Dec.19, but not posted to the account until several days later. The representative told me it didn’t matter when Duke Energy deposited the check.

He asked me when did the bank pay it? I said it was paid before the deadline according to my statement and the agent I talked to last month said the electronic charges would be credited back if the payment was received on time. He said they could not refund the electronic charges because Western Union received those payments and not Duke Energy.

I told him I was promised the charges would be credited back. It didn’t seem like he really cared. This is another example of customer service that has gone bad. I have been with Duke Energy for years and never miss a payment. A few years ago when we had a bad storm a limb fell on one of the power lines and caused an open neutral that blew out several appliances in homes that belonged to us. Duke Energy said it was an act of God and they were not responsible. By the way, the tree limbs around the lines had not been maintained for years. Right after we filed the complaint and they denied responsibility the trees were trimmed back off the lines. If I had an option to change providers I would do it in a second but the monopoly continues.

I was taught growing up that we were always responsible for our actions. It would be better to admit that we did something wrong and face the consequences than to find out later that it was our fault. My dad was a fair man and appreciated it when we told the truth. I think he went easier on us.

But this is now and things have changed.

To me if you make a promise to someone you keep it and if you don’t then shame on you. Karma is one of those things you really don’t want to mess with. It can come back to bite you where it really, really hurts.

Engine • Continued from Page 1A

with the demands that will come with expected growth in the city.

“If we build a third station because of the growth expected to come, we have to plan for the future,” Swartout said.

In other business, city council heard the new five-year plan presented by city planning director Todd Vande Berg, which shows the city advancing in several areas.

Vande Berg’s presentation pointed to planning areas within the downtown area, the U.S. 301 and green fields, airport industrial corridor, education and branding.

“There are a lot of opportunities to be proactive,” Vande Berg said. “We have everything prioritized and we have action plans for each priority.”

Also Monday, Jud Baggett of Baggett-Reutimann Accounting, presented the audit report for the city’s 2016-2107 fiscal year. The audit noted the city administration took a conservative approach to balancing the 2017 budget.

The city’s gross taxable property value increased for the third straight year. Ad valorem taxes increased by \$120,497 to \$3,868,023 using the millage rate of 6.35 mills, an increase above the rolled-back-rate of 6.2139.

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Depot Museum To Reopen

Renovations, Repairs Took Longer Than Expected

Story and photo by Joe Potter

The Zephyrhills Depot Museum is anticipated to reopen in mid-April after having been closed for more than a year, city manager Steve Spina said last week.

A great deal of work has been done in the interior of the 90-year-old building at 39110 South Ave., since it closed in late 2017, Spina said.

Rotten flooring had to be replaced along with baseboards and the interior of the building was remodeled and received a fresh coat of paint. The work took longer than anticipated, Spina said on Jan. 10.

Some people have rented space in the 2,700-square-foot building for parties and meetings and city department heads have held meetings there during the renovation process but it has been closed to the

general public.

The train display that was located in a large room in the rear of the depot has been moved into the middle room. This frees up additional space for rental space for events after the building reopens.

A model train club will be holding an exhibit at the depot on March 16.

One of the challenges of maintaining the depot in the past was the inability to staff it. The building was only open three hours a week on some occasions.

“We wanted to come up with better ways to use it,” Spina said.

Historical exhibits that had been in the depot are being stored at another building on the depot’s property during the renovations. They will be returned after the Depot Museum reopens, Spina said.

The depot was built by the Atlantic



Closed since late 2017, the Zephyrhills Depot Museum on South Avenue has received various renovations and upgrades and should reopen soon.

Coast Line Railroad in 1927.

Zephyrhills purchased the former CSX Railroad depot in 1989 and moved it 200 feet west of its original location.

The first restoration of the building began in 1997 with funds provided through a grant from the Florida Department of Transportation.

New Classrooms At Zephyrhills High School To Open In The Fall

Part Of A \$28M Renovation

by Joe Potter

Construction of a new, two-story, 17-classroom building at Zephyrhills High School will be completed in July, said Mike Gude, director of construction services for Pasco County Schools.

The new classrooms will be available for students to

start using them when the 2019-20 school year begins on Aug. 12.

The new classroom building is part of an overall \$28 million renovation at ZHS that will be completed in 2021, Gude said.

There will be eight classrooms on the first floor along with a small office, restrooms and a large mechanical room. The second floor will have nine classrooms along with a small office and restrooms.

This is the first new classroom building constructed at ZHS since a building with eight classrooms was constructed there about eight years ago, Gude said.

Hepner Architects of Tampa designed the building and Creative Contractors of Clearwater is its contractor.

A total renovation of the ZHS campus will begin after the new classroom building opens. This will be the first major remodel at ZHS in several years according to Gude.

Burgess • Continued from Page 1A

Burgess is scheduled for an interview with the Cabinet at its next meeting, set for Jan. 31.

Burgess must be unanimously approved by the Cabinet and will also have a confirmation hearing in the state Senate.



Randy Maggard



Kathy Lewis

Burgess was elected to the Florida House in 2014 and was re-elected in 2016 and 2018. He is a captain in the U.S. Army Reserve and serves as a JAG Corps attorney.

Pasco County Elections Supervisor Brian Corley said the process to select a new representative for District 38 would begin after Burgess has submitted a formal letter of resignation of his House seat. The Florida Division of Elections will then notify Corley of dates for a primary election – if needed – and then for the general election. The seat could possibly be filled by mid- to late April.

The same procedure must be followed as that of a regular election, Corley said. Candidates will need to qualify and file. A primary election will be held only if more than one candidate files to run for either the Republican or Democratic Party.

Republican Randy Maggard and Democrat Kathy Lewis have both prefiled with the Florida Department of Elections.

Burgess represents 110,000 people in District 38 and there are 40 precincts in the district. Corley said people could vote by mail, vote early or vote on the actual Election Day.

It would cost \$180,000 if only a general election was held and it would cost \$360,000 if both a primary and general election were held, Corley said.

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A table of silent auction and raffle items played a role in the fund-raising efforts for the Humane Society of Pasco County at the Zephyrhills Brewing Company.

Brewery • Continued from Page 1A

Company has partnered with different organizations for in-house events for Operation Homefront, East Pasco Meals on Wheels, and First United Methodist Church of Zephyrhills Food Pantry.

In addition to raising money for First United Methodist Church, ZBC collected canned goods for the church netting more than 100 pounds of food for the pantry.

"It's one of the reasons we're here is to give back," Robert Hilferding said. "We're retired, so we're not out to raise a family. We wanted to structure this so we can be there to help people raise money for their organizations."

These events have raised more than \$4,000 in 2018 and the goal for 2019 is \$6,500.

That first step toward increasing their philanthropy came Saturday as the Hilferding's welcomed the Humane Society of Pasco to the brewery, where more than \$1,000 was raised and more than 500 pounds of pet food was collected.

Humane Society of Pasco Vice President Christine DePaolo wasn't sure what to expect in having a fund-raiser in a brewery, but she was overjoyed with the response.

"I am so honored that they chose us to help," DePaolo said. "The fact that they added the food donations is wonderful. An event like this helps bring attention to our shelter. This helps to bring us to this community as well."

To reach that \$6,500 goal, the Hilferdings and ZBC are growing a reputation as being a charity-friendly location. The word is out and many more events will be hosted on the Fifth Avenue brewery.

"We have finally broken the barrier where people know we can help them raise money," Robert said. "Now we expect to get more people interested and come out for a day and do their thing. We're excited about it."

"The bottom line is we just like to do it," Robert said. "Giving back is always good. I'm happy about what we do here."

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Gator • Continued from Page 1A

Two years ago, Rhoden put in an order for a custom-built Shirley Fabrication cooker and finally received his prized piece of equipment in October. He ordered the 18-foot-long cooker so he could cook more for the community. As a plus, he now gets to enjoy it in his free time as well as entering Saturday's contest.

"I'm having a blast. That's what I got it for. My motto is the good times are always around the cook. All the stories are being told there and all the good times are there," Rhoden said. "If someone is having a hard time, I want to be able to be there and help out."

Rhoden will be entering in all categories for the backyard competition – cooking up brisket, ribs, chicken, and Boston butts for pulled pork. In addition, he will also be vending a Brunswick stew featuring a conglomeration of tasty surprises, as well as servings from two whole slow-cooked alligators.

Yes, whole alligators.

If you know Rhoden, this is no surprise. He believes he will be the only one, perhaps the first vendor yet, to cook up whole smoked alligator at the festival.



Jack Rhoden's new 18-foot Shirley Fabrication Cooker is sure to make a statement at Saturday's BBQ and Blues Festival. The massive grill was built to Rhoden's specs and took two years for him to receive.



To prepare for his first time competing in the Pigz in Z'hills BBQ cook-off, Jack Rhoden hosted a practice run about two weeks ago to test his recipes with friends and family.

Photos Provided

Rhoden is a sixth generation Florida cracker, having been born in Tampa in 1967 and living in Zephyrhills since 1983. His grandfather owned land in the Everglades, which he and his family would frequently visit when he was young and, to no surprise, would often encounter gators.

Growing up around the reptiles allowed Rhoden to make a job out of it. He served as an official gator trapper for the state of Florida serving Pasco and some of Hillsborough counties for 12 years. He had to retire from trapping in 2009 to focus on his day job working with a communications company.

In 2006, he caught what was at the time the second largest alligator in Florida at 13 feet, six inches, and weighing in right around 1,000 pounds. There have been larger gators caught since then, and Rhoden says he might return to trapping once he retires from his current position.

Rhoden recently conducted a BBQ test run at home for him and up to 25 others to taste his recipes. He said it went "phenomenal".

The chests of the alligators will be stuffed with sausage

for extra flavor and the gators will be covered with a signature rub of Rhoden's before entering the smoker.

"It turned out really good. I'm not even going to mess with it, it was that good," Rhoden said.

Be sure to stop by Cracker Jack's Pits Off BBQ and the dozens of other vendors during the Pigz in Z'hills BBQ and Blues Festival at 5200 Airport Road this Saturday. The festival runs from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Admission is free with \$10 parking.



In 2006 during his time working as an alligator trapper for the state of Florida, Jack Rhoden trapped the second largest alligator in the state at that time. The reptile, pictured, weighed about 1,000 pounds and measured 13 feet, six inches long.

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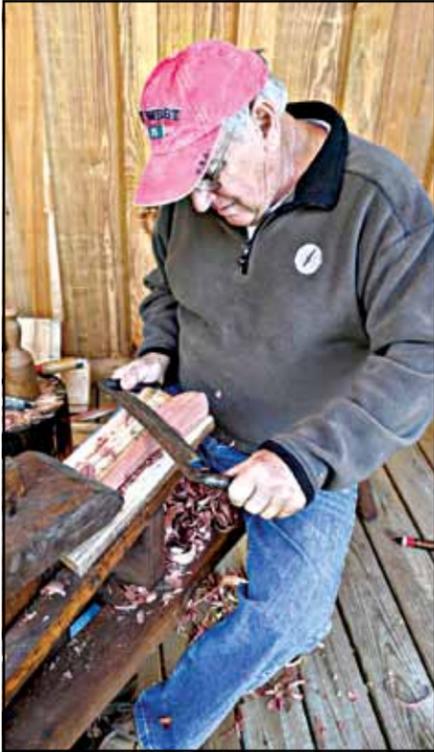
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Dave Colberg of Zephyrhills uses a draw knife to create the basic shape of a wooden spoon before the decorative carving.



Sara Rose belts out rock and roll as well as classic country and western music as part of the Sara Rose Band's entertainment at the Raising Cane festival on Saturday.

Staff Report

There was something for everybody at the Pioneer Florida Museum and Village on Saturday at the annual Raising Cane event.

From tasting sugar cane syrup to selecting from an array of cooks in the chili cook-off, taste buds were on a rollercoaster of flavors. In between bites guests were able to shop from dozens of local and craft vendors.



Charley Kirksey of Lacoochee and Marcus Copeland of Dade City skim the impurities off the top of a batch of cane sugar being cooked at the Pioneer Florida Museum on Saturday.

Photos by Richard K. Riley

The day started off with the classic pancake breakfast, complete with the unique syrup to top it off. Regular syrup was also offered for anyone who was not used to the sugar cane taste. Live entertainment kicked off soon after, featuring performances by the Sara Rose Band, The Sandy Back Porch, and The Barking Dogs.

The chili cook-off, chili verde and salsa competition were sanctioned by the International Chili Society. Cash and trophies were awarded to first, second and third place with Steve Otto serving as the celebrity guest. A people's choice award was also granted.

Visit www.pioneerfloridamuseum.org for upcoming events at the museum.

Zephyrhills Senior Center To Hold Open House Friday

Pasco County Senior Services Division will sponsor an open house event at Saint Elizabeth Episcopal Church to celebrate their renewed partnership that will offer local seniors nutritious meals and a variety of recreational and educational activities. The casual get-together will feature light refreshments, door prizes and music.

The event will be held Jan. 18 from 1 to 3 p.m. Saint Elizabeth Episcopal Church is located at 5855 16th St. "We invite all seniors, along with their family and

friends, to come out and learn what their local senior center has to offer," said Pasco County Senior Services Manager Diane Cunningham. "It's a place where food and fun come together as one."

For additional information about the open house, daily meals, and upcoming programs, please contact the Dade City Senior Center at (352) 521-5151. Seniors are always welcome to visit and attend lunch at any senior center in Pasco County. Each center offers nutrition

counseling, education, and an opportunity to participate in fun events and activities.

The Pasco County Senior Services Division is dedicated to supporting the health, vitality, independence, and well-being of seniors in Pasco County. To make a donation, or to learn about volunteer opportunities, connect with the Pasco County Senior Services Division through one of the six senior centers or through social media.

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